

COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION/INFORMATION SYSTEMS

September 18, 2002

5:30 PM

In the absence of Chairman Gatsas, Clerk Bernier called the meeting to order.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Forest, it was voted to name Alderman Guinta Chairman pro-tem.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Guinta, Osborne, Forest, O'Neil

Absent: Alderman Gatsas

Messrs: F. Thomas, Mayor Baines, G. Sullivan

Chairman Guinta addressed Item 3 of the agenda:

Request of Mayor Baines that the Committee consider various consolidation and reorganization proposals.

Clerk Bernier stated I would like to provide an update for you. I received an e-mail from Seth Wall, the Mayor's Assistant, and they will have a proposal ready for you within two weeks. You might want to table this item.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Forest, it was voted to table this item.

Chairman Guinta addressed Item 4 of the agenda:

Request of Mayor Baines that the Committee act on the Bag and Tag Proposal.

Alderman Osborne stated this was up before us a couple of months ago and it was not approved. The people of Manchester, the taxpayers, don't have too much left as far as services. They have garbage pick-up, some asphalt, street lighting and some plowing and that is about it so I think they should have something and also I think it would create quite a problem in the area, especially my ward, with the garbage. I am having a tough enough time now with it. I move to receive and file this item.

Alderman Forest duly seconded the motion.

Alderman O'Neil stated I, too, have some great reservations about bag and tag but I do know that our Public Works Department has put a lot of time and effort into researching this and it may be helpful to us, even if in the end we don't end up voting on it, just to educate ourselves on what is going on with solid waste and what some other cities in New Hampshire have done. I have some reservations about whether a City over 100,000 can do this. It is my understanding that the City of Worcester has done this. If I was being asked to vote on this tonight, I would vote against it but I think as a courtesy to the department I would like to see them at least make a presentation to the Committee on it. I don't think they have had that opportunity and they put a lot of time into it.

Mr. Thomas stated we are prepared to discuss the proposal tonight, however, what I would like to recommend instead of just receiving and filing this request is that you may want to schedule another meeting allowing us maybe 20 minutes or a half hour to give a detailed presentation on not only the pay to throw program, bag and tag, but a little bit of the history of solid waste – where we have been and where we are going and what are some of the future potential requirements regarding recycling that may be coming down from Concord. As part of this presentation, we could have available people who have first hand experience with the program.

Alderman Osborne stated I would like to ask...you said there are other areas like Worcester and so forth where this is working fine. There must be other areas that it is not. Are you going to bring those in as well as the others?

Mr. Thomas responded quite frankly we don't know of any places where a pay to throw program is not working. It is being utilized in countless communities throughout the country, not only throughout the country but in New Hampshire and the information that we have been able to gather shows that they have been successful. As you know, one of the big concerns is that there is going to be a lot of illegal dumping. Well again I mentioned it before that when we were forced to go into recycling or taking yard waste out of the waste stream we were forced to go to special containers and bags. There was some concern at that time that there was going to be a lot of illegal dumping of yard waste. We haven't experienced that at all. Part of the proposal that we would be bringing forward regarding pay to throw or bag and tag is that part of that operation would include full-time enforcement personnel. Now you are going to say well how do you trace back some illegal dumping. Well, you know the amount of junk mail that you get and all of that junk mail has your name and address on it. If somebody decides for whatever reason they are not going to conform to the program we, in most cases, will be able to trace it back. Yes, if somebody has a six pack of empty beer bottles

and no junk mail it may be difficult but again I think that with education a lot of the problems could be resolved. In addition as I have said in the past the whole philosophy that we will be going into a lot of detail on is that you are setting your own destiny. If you don't want to recycle, which would save you the cost of buying the bags, you don't need to. You just buy more bags. If you want to recycle, which obviously is a benefit to everybody, then you are going to minimize your cost. Yes, I know that you are going to say well why don't we just add it on to the tax rate. That is an option, however, when you add it onto the tax rate everybody is feeling the burden pretty much the same based on property value. Through this pay to throw program a person who is renting is going to share his portion of the cost of solid waste. An elderly single person who generates maybe one little bag every two weeks is going to pay very little towards solid waste costs but yet on the other hand a large family that is generating a lot of solid waste will also pay more. It is a fair way of doing it. Again, I think the point that I am trying to make here tonight is don't take any action at this time to stop considering it. As I mentioned to you before, we are dealing with the immediate budget crisis. Let's take a look at bag and tag over the next few months. Let's take a look at the merits over the next few months. After that if the Board and the public is still against bag and tag, well we have given it our best shot but I don't think that anybody is at the stage right now where you can be comfortable long-term that this is not a good approach to potentially be taking.

Alderman Osborne asked how much money would we be making on recycling and so forth.

Mr. Thomas answered you are not going to make any money on recycling but the net revenues out of a full blown bag and tag pay to throw program for a full year is about \$2 million.

Alderman Osborne asked how much is it going to cost for another department to police it.

Mr. Thomas answered again I don't believe that there is going to be a need for another department.

Alderman Osborne responded well not another department but somebody has to police this.

Mr. Thomas replied built into that cost is two full-time employees with pick-up trucks who would be managing the program. That is in the gross. The net is still going to be \$2 million.

Alderman Osborne asked wouldn't it be...I am not saying that I would approve of this but wouldn't it be a better idea to start one ward at a time or a ward that would be more prone to do bag and tag rather than an inner City ward like Ward 3, 4, and 5. You know what I am talking about – three tenements and four tenements. They can't afford \$4, \$5 or \$6 a week. They can't even afford to buy milk, some of them. What are they going to do with their garbage?

Mr. Thomas answered again I think the cost is minimal if you are going to recycle.

Alderman Osborne replied it is minimal but people just don't want to spend the money. \$1, \$2 or \$3 a week is a lot to some people.

Mr. Thomas responded but you are talking about a small family in a tenement. What about a person in a single-family house now that is paying a disproportionate share of the cost of solid waste services on their taxes? Is that fair?

Alderman Osborne replied well they are still going to be paying because I don't think a lot of them are going to pay attention to the bags. I just can't buy it. I don't see it.

Mr. Thomas stated well I keep saying it and obviously you don't believe me. That is why I would like...

Alderman Osborne interjected it is not that I don't believe you. I have an idea and you have one.

Mr. Thomas stated well it is always nice to hear it from somebody different. We have a new recycling coordination – Joanne McLaughlin. She has researched it. She is prepared to make a nice Powerpoint presentation on the subject. We are prepared to try to make arrangements to bring up somebody from the City of Worcester who has had long-term experience. I think asking a person from Worcester who has been involved with the program regarding illegal dumping what happens in the more urban areas, what happens in the downtown areas and finding out what kind of history they have had would be beneficial.

Alderman Osborne stated there has to be some place that had it and it didn't work well. There has to be some place. Nothing is 100%.

Mr. Thomas replied there might be but those communities aren't identified in the literature that is put out on the subject.

Alderman Forest stated I know, Frank, that you have been working hard at this. It has been brought to our attention several times. I am already having the problem in my ward and I have called the police a couple of times this week alone – Goffstown Road, the back of Kimball Street, Straw Road...you are talking about enforcement. That is what is not there. The answers I get is it is on private property or we don't have the authority to do this. I can take all of you back and you have probably been there yourself behind Kimball Street. It is drywall heaven there. Every drywaller in the State that has to pay at the drop-off is going into those back woods and this has been going on for 20 years. The Police Department is aware it is happening but the problem the Police Department has is it is private property. There is no teeth for them to enforce it. Again, this has been brought up several times. The taxpayers now are being asked to buy those barrels. You are asking the taxpayers to spend \$1/bag and it is all happening at once. A little bit at a time but this is all thrown at them at once. Again, I will give you the chance to explain it but the people in my ward...I am getting the phone calls every time this is mentioned. Maybe we ought to call it something else. That is all I have to say.

Mr. Thomas responded again at least in my opinion, my recommendation to you is let the discussion continue at least for one more presentation to this Committee and possibly to the Board if you deem that that is appropriate. At the end of that if you are still not convinced and if you feel the public is not convinced then fine at least we have given an effort. I think the reason why the Mayor keeps proposing bag and tag is that obviously you are grappling with budgetary problems every day, not to mention myself and it is not going to get any better so I think it is worth at least taking a look at another source of revenue, another way of distributing the cost of a major service, basic service to the community in what could be a more equitable manner.

Alderman O'Neil stated all I hear the Public Works Director asking for is to allow a presentation to be made and I don't think that is an unreasonable request so I would like to see us at least allow the presentation to be made and then what members of the Board decide to do later on is their prerogative. That would be my recommendation.

Mayor Baines stated I would urge the Board to continue to let the Director of Public Works continue with the study of this issue. As you know, I presented figures for it twice and I did not calculate figures for an implementation this year. I just want to keep the issue on the front burner so to speak. I want to put this in context and I appreciate what Alderman Forest is saying and I think there is a lot of truth to that but the fact of the matter is that if we were meeting the State's goal established under the RSA's right now. We would be at 40% recycling. We are at approximately 8% or 9% right now from the curb. The figures that have been given to us repeatedly are for every 10% that we recycle we save approximately

\$300,000. If you put it into context we are literally throwing away \$1 million every year that is what we are throwing away if, in fact, those figures and I am assuming they are correct...10% at \$300,000 and we are at about 8% so if we were recycling at 40% we would be saving the taxpayers right now \$1 million a year. Either we do it through this fee system, which is by the way implemented I believe already in about 30 communities in the State of NH. Thirty communities in the State of NH are doing. We are hauling our trash to another community now. That is not right. It is simply not right and it is not a revenue issue for me. It is the right thing to do. We have to figure out how we are going to get there with more participation in recycling and address this issue with the community. Maybe it is education. Maybe it is setting goals that we say by such and such a year we either reach a certain percentage or we are going to have to go to this kind of a system or what have you but we need to keep emphasizing we are throwing away \$1 million a year in the trash. I think as the taxpayers begin to understand it and all of us begin to understand it we will begin recycling more. I believe Nashua is at about 13% or 14% right now and they don't have the bag and tag system. Even under that measure we are falling short so somehow we have to address this issue in the long term. Somehow in City government long before I was a part of it we got into fee systems for a lot of things. As I mentioned during my budget presentation to get rid of an old air conditioner now costs \$25. I paid that this year. In order to deal with my yard refuse I have to pay for bags and it is approximately 50 cents a bag. I have a very small lot of land but I fill up a lot of bags in a year, both in the spring and the fall, and I willingly do that because it is the right thing to do. Don't sell short the citizens of this community. I have a letter on my desk written by an elderly citizen of the community advocating for this system because she knows it is the right thing to do. We keep saying...yes you get calls and I get calls but understand I believe the citizenry will support things that are right and they are willing to pay a modest fee to do that. I think often times we sell our citizens short when they recognize we are throwing that amount of money away - \$1 million a year thrown away in trash. That is not right.

Alderman Forest stated don't get me wrong. I don't sell the citizens short. If we want to make recycling mandatory...I am not opposed to making recycling mandatory. What I am opposed to is recycling is voluntary and there are a lot of people, including my wife and my daughter, who are very dedicated recyclers. The problem I find and you can ask Kevin Shepperd here how many phone calls he gets from me because the recycling or the yard waste doesn't get picked up and that is a problem.

Mayor Baines replied that is a problem. It doesn't get picked up in my house, too, on occasion.

Alderman Forest stated I don't think there are people in my ward who would get upset if we made recycling mandatory. What you are saying is we are charging \$1/bag and there are people who are just going to throw it somewhere else and the honest people out there...I am not opposed to mandatory recycling.

Mr. Thomas replied I don't think you want to see mandatory recycling and the reason for that is if you think enforcement is going to be a problem with a pay to throw program, it is 100 times worse with a mandatory recycling program. You, again, still have to have special bags because they have to be see-through. You have to have patrols that go around so that I check every time you put out a bag of trash to make sure that you are conforming to recycling guidelines. To me, that is almost Gestapo tactics. The pay to throw program is a voluntary program. What you are trying to do is equally spread out the cost of solid waste services. Again, if you are a young couple making a lot of money, yuppies, and you don't want to recycle, you buy more bags. Fine, you have chosen your way of life. If you are very environmentally conscious and you want to recycle, you are going to buy fewer bags reducing your solid waste costs.

Alderman Forest stated I sort of disagree on the Gestapo tactics. I lived under mandatory recycling when I moved to Arizona for eight months. I didn't see the Gestapo tactics but you may be right coming this far because we haven't done it before. In Arizona, it is mandatory. They have the containers for it. No question that they have enforcement. I don't know about the Gestapo tactics but you may be right here because we have never done it before. That is all I have to say.

Mayor Baines stated I would add that I would also be opposed to mandatory recycling perhaps for...maybe not using as such a strident tone as the Public Works Director did because I believe it should be voluntary and I believe in the system. Really, the price of the bags is not the issue. You can charge 25 cents a bag. Some communities, I believe, in Worcester just raised it because they weren't satisfied that they had...again it may not be that community but it was a community I read about that wasn't satisfied with 30% recycling so they were increasing the price of the bags. Now understand we are only at about 8% or 9% and we need to address that so thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Alderman Osborne stated seeing we are having such a problem with this, when we had the budget it was turned down and now we are back again with it and I think...I have no problem listening. I like to listen but if we can't seem to get anywhere with this I think the best thing to do is let the citizens of Manchester decide and put it on a referendum question and take it from there. It is a lot of pressure on everybody here.

Alderman O'Neil stated I think where I am suggesting we go, tonight, Mr. Chairman is just a vote to allow the Public Works Director to make a presentation at a meeting in the future. I think it went down on a vote of 14-0 with this sitting Board. I think it is a good opportunity for us to learn more about what is going on with solid waste in our City, with the recycling in our City and even with the yard waste in our City. I would support that.

Chairman Guinta stated there is a motion on the floor. Does Alderman Osborne wish to amend the motion or would you prefer that I take a vote on your motion?

Alderman Osborne stated I will withdraw my motion to receive and file.

Alderman Forest stated I will withdraw my second.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Osborne, it was voted to table this item and have the Public Works Director and his staff make a presentation to the Committee on Administration at a future meeting.

Chairman Guinta addressed Item 5 of the agenda:

Communication from William Laforge advising that the handle to his shutoff valve was broken by a Water Department employee during the installation of a new water meter and requesting that the matter be resolved as quickly as possible.

Alderman O'Neil stated my understanding is that this was taken care of. In fact, the Director showed me the valve that is in his pocket.

Chairman Guinta stated I would note that the date of this letter is July 20. I would assume that this has been taken care of.

Mr. Bowen stated it has been taken care of.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Forest, it was voted to receive and file this item.

Chairman Guinta addressed Item 6 of the agenda:

Copy of a communication from Joe Kelly Levasseur to the Superintendent of Schools relative to a request of the Manchester Concerned Taxpayer's to air their monthly meetings on MCTV.

Alderman Forest moved the item. Alderman O'Neil duly seconded the motion for discussion.

Alderman Forest stated this has already been taken care of. It has already been aired. I would move to receive and file.

Alderman O'Neil duly seconded the motion. Chairman Guinta called for a vote. There being none opposed, the motion carried.

Chairman Guinta addressed Item 7 of the agenda:

Final Report of the Mayor's MCTV Task Force.

Alderman Wihby moved the item. Alderman O'Neil duly seconded the motion for discussion.

Clerk Bernier stated I would like to update the Committee. I spoke to Matthew this afternoon and he has not received any response from that Committee to meet. It is my understanding also that the Mayor said they will not meet. We did send to letters.

Chairman Guinta asked so you are saying that the MCTV Task Force would not meet again.

Deputy Solicitor Arnold stated a letter did go out asking the Task Force members to contact either Matt Normand or I. I understand that Matt Normand has not heard from any Committee members and I have not heard from any Committee members. From that lack of contact I guess I would make the conclusion that they don't wish to meet further.

Dr. Grace Sullivan stated I know that the Superintendent and the Vice Chairman of the School Board, Leslee Stewart, met with the Mayor to discuss this and they obviously would have to speak for themselves but what they told me was that they were going to be meeting with members of the Task Force and members of the Committee on Administration to sit down and look at the proposal. Whether or not they just didn't get together with us because it is the summer time I don't know.

Clerk Bernier replied I have no knowledge of that.

Dr. Sullivan stated I think about a week ago the Mayor met with the Superintendent of Schools, Leslee Stewart and another member of the School Board on this.

Alderman O'Neil asked can we have the Clerk contact all of the parties and see where everyone is at on this so we can make a decision. I don't know if we need a motion on that.

Chairman Guinta replied I think it would make sense to table this and add your language.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Forest, it was voted to table this item and instruct the City Clerk's Office to contact all of the parties to see if they do intend to get together with the Committee and report back.

There being no further business, on motion of Alderman Forest, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee